



## North Carolina Sandhills Safe Harbor Program

# Safe Harbor News

## Scotland County Land Protected!

Interior Secretary Gale Norton recently announced more than \$70 million in grants to 28 states and one territory to support conservation planning and acquisition of vital habitat for threatened and endangered fish, wildlife and plant species.

Funded through the Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund and authorized by Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, the grants will enable states to work with private landowners, conservation groups and other agencies to initiate conservation planning efforts and acquire and protect habitat to support the conservation of threatened and endangered species.

Among the recipients of these Habitat Conservation Land Acquisition grants is the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission with a \$1.9 million grant to acquire and manage land that will aid in the recovery of the North Carolina Sandhills West population of the federally-endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. In addition to the woodpecker, the acquisition will enable North Carolina to increase the intensity of restoration and management of the longleaf pine habitat in the area.

Acquisition of the Rich Tract will provide protection of a critical corridor between two disjunct blocks of the North Carolina Sandhills Gamelands, and acquisition of the Carrington Tract will add 725 contiguous acres to Block F of the Gamelands, protecting foraging habitat currently used by red-cockaded woodpeckers on Block F. Purchase of these two tracts will help ensure that encroachment of incompatible development around these blocks does not adversely affect the State's ability to manage its lands for the benefit of both listed and unlisted species. Further, this action will enable the State to increase the intensity of restoration and management of the longleaf pine habitat in this area, particularly with the use of prescribed fire. The project will contribute substantially to fulfilling the recovery strategies developed for the Sandhills population of the red-cockaded woodpecker. Recovery of this population is a high priority for the North Carolina Sandhills Conservation Partnership, which is composed of six parties including the United States Army.

## Bats In Our Communities - What You Need To Know

by Erin Guin

Though they have thrived for over 50 million years through a variety of changing climatic conditions, appearing on the scene just as the dinosaurs were disappearing, their survival is now being threatened by us. Over half of the 46 species of bats in North America are considered either endangered, threatened, or are candidates for being listed as such by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency of the federal government charged with the management and protection of our nation's wildlife and plant species. The rapid decline of bat populations has largely come as a result of fear, fueled by myths, and the destruction of habitat.

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Southeastern myotis: photo by Mark Gumbert

The word “bat” often conjures fanciful images of Halloween, blood-sucking vampires, or a vicious flying ‘rodent’ in most minds. Consequently, bats have been, and continue to be, some of the most misunderstood and persecuted animals. Contrary to what most people think, bats don’t get entangled in your hair, they are not blind (most have acute vision), and they are extremely clean flying mammals (though rodents are also mammals, bats are not rodents). They also play a key role in our communities and ecosystems as nighttime pollinators and nature’s own ‘bug zappers’. The main predators of night-flying insects, bats consume a variety of bugs considered pests by residents, recreationists and farmers alike. A single Little Brown bat, a species common across North America, can eat up to 2,000 mosquito-sized insects in just ONE night. Just one large colony of Big Brown bats, another common species, can protect farmers from up to 33 million or more destructive rootworms each summer. A decrease in bat numbers not only increases the demand for chemical pesticides, but can weaken and jeopardize ecosystems (as well as other plants and animals that rely on bats to do their jobs), and can harm human economies.



Red Bat: photo by Erin Guinn

Another word often associated with bats is rabies. Rabies is a virus found in mammals (mainly raccoons, skunks, foxes, coyotes, and bats) and is transmitted through a bite from an infected animal; however, exposure of open wounds to infected saliva can also result in transmission. Though less than .005% of bats actually contract rabies, as a precaution they should not be handled. They should not be needlessly killed either.

We live in an age of knowledge, when awareness of our surroundings and each other is ever increasing. Long held fears and myths can now be replaced with understanding and respect for the role bats, and other wildlife, play in our communities and the wild places around us. More information about bats can be found on the web at <http://www.batcon.org>. Including information about what to do if you encounter a bat in your home and how to make bat houses.

## Fort Bragg Rare Bat Inventory

By Erin Guinn and Janice Patten

It was early in the morning on June 10<sup>th</sup> when the small bat was taken out of the net hung across a slough in Drowning Creek at Camp Mackall. The bat, however, was not like the others caught here—it was a lactating (nursing) female Southeastern myotis. This was the first Southeastern myotis recorded in both Richmond and Moore counties. Though the Drowning Creek extends through several counties, each containing the cypress gum swamps preferred by the species, Robeson and Bladen are the closest counties these imperiled bats have previously been recorded in, and they aren't *that* close, making this a significant find.

The capture of the Southeastern myotis is a result of an inventory initiated in the summer of 2003. It is the goal of the inventory to document which of the 11 potential species are using Fort Bragg and Camp Mackall. Two species of particular interest are the State Threatened Rafinesque's Big-eared Bat (also a Federal Species of Concern), and the Southeastern myotis, a Federal and State Species of Concern. In order to document the presence of these and other species of bats, the inventory consists of several differ-



Southeastern myotis: photo by Mark Gumbert

## Sandhills Ecological Institute

### Safe Harbor Agreements

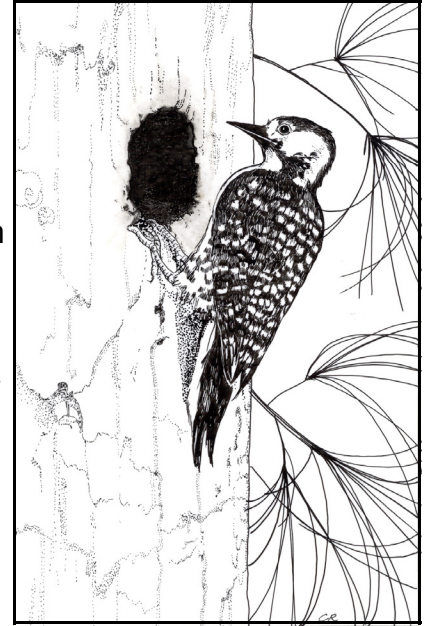
90 Landowners

48,690 acres

by Kerry Brust

Each spring since 1998, biologists from the Sandhills Ecological Institute (SEI) have monitored red-cockaded woodpecker (RCW) nesting effort on private lands in Moore and Hoke Counties.

The scope of work also included RCW groups located on private lands in Cumberland County from 1998-2000. Funding for the collection of these data on Safe Harbor properties have been provided by the Sandhills and Asheville U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) Field Offices. SEI has used discretionary funds to monitor clusters located on Safe Harbor properties when federal funding has not been available, in addition to clusters situated on non-Safe Harbor properties. SEI also conducts demographic monitoring of RCW groups on the Fort Bragg Army Reservation (western region), McCain Tract, Calloway Tract and Weymouth Woods.



SEI, in cooperation with the FWS, directs cavity management within RCW clusters on Safe Harbor properties. First, RCW clusters are identified which lack a suitable number of cavities for roosting and nesting. Artificial cavities are then provisioned in live pine trees using an insert box or the drill technique to establish additional, quality cavities for RCWs. Some active, enlarged RCW cavities have metal restrictor plates installed to prevent other species, such as red-bellied and red-headed woodpeckers and European starlings, from usurping RCW cavities. Intensive monitoring and cavity management within RCW groups on private land clusters is anticipated through 2005.

SEI began a research study of the American kestrel, a small raptor, on western Fort Bragg in 2003. These secondary cavity nesters utilize enlarged cavities of RCW cavity trees (live pines and snags) to rear young. Data regarding reproductive success, abundance and speciation are under investigation. The Southeastern kestrel, an endangered sub-species of the American kestrel which is known to occur further south, may nest in the North Carolina Sandhills. Funding for this project was provided by the Fort Bragg Endangered Species Branch and Dr. J.H. Carter III.

The Sandhills Ecological Institute is a non-profit organization located in Southern Pines. Biologists Kerry Brust, Stephen Anchor, Jennifer Maynard and Kendra Noyes comprise the field staff at SEI. Phone: (910) 695-0872; Email: [seimain@pinehurst.net](mailto:seimain@pinehurst.net).



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## Conservancy Announces Rockefeller Bequest

Reprinted from The Nature conservancy - Press Release

DURHAM, NC, October 19, 2004 — The Nature Conservancy announced today that it will receive the historic Long Valley Farm in Harnett and Cumberland Counties through the estate of James Stillman Rockefeller, who passed away in August at the age of 102.

Mr. Rockefeller was the captain of the Yale University rowing team in the early 1920s, and helped the United States secure the gold medal in rowing at the 1924 Paris Olympics. He was the oldest known Olympic gold medal winner. The son of William G. Rockefeller and the great-nephew of Standard Oil founder John D. Rockefeller, James S. Rockefeller was president and chairman of National City Bank in New York, and sat on the board of the American Museum of Natural History.

Mr. Rockefeller had long expressed a wish to preserve Long Valley Farm's bucolic mix of farm land, pasture and forest, and had discussed the 1,380 acre property with officials from the Conservancy's North Carolina Chapter in recent years.

"The Nature Conservancy is very grateful to Mr. Rockefeller for his desire to see Long Valley Farm protected, and we are thrilled to play a role in its preservation," said Fred Annand, associate director of the North Carolina Chapter.

Long Valley Farm, which is listed with the National Register of Historic Places, was originally established as part of the Overhills estate in the 1920s by Rockefeller's uncle Percy, and has produced everything from cattle and tobacco to timber and turpentine. Approximately 900 acres of Long Valley Farm is forested, with the remainder comprised of pasture and farm fields and a number of structures, including a large home used by Rockefeller. The property is bisected by Jumping Run Creek, which flows into the Little River in Cumberland County.

The farm, which is bordered on two sides by Fort Bragg Military Reservation, is in the flight path of Pope Air Force Base, hence its protection will help protect public safety and military airlift operations. The property will be permanently preserved as a natural area and will be managed by The Nature Conservancy or transferred to a suitable public agency.

When biologists from the Conservancy and the North Carolina Natural Heritage Program inventoried the property in 2002, they found a number of interesting natural areas, from healthy stands of longleaf pine to a cypress-gum swamp with canopy trees 100 feet tall and wet meadows that support a number of carnivorous plant species such as pitcher plants and sundews. Long Valley Farm supports rare bird species as well: Bachman's sparrow and the loggerhead shrike have been observed on the property, as well as the federally listed red-cockaded woodpecker. The Eastern fox squirrel is also present.



The Nature Conservancy is working on a management plan for the farm's natural areas, and will use prescribed fire as a primary management tool to reinvigorate the property's longleaf pine habitat, which thrives on periodic, low-intensity fire. "We are particularly excited about the longleaf at Long Valley Farm," said Rick Studenmund, the North Carolina Chapter's Sandhills project director. "Some parts of the longleaf forest on the property have been recently burned and are in good ecological shape; other parts



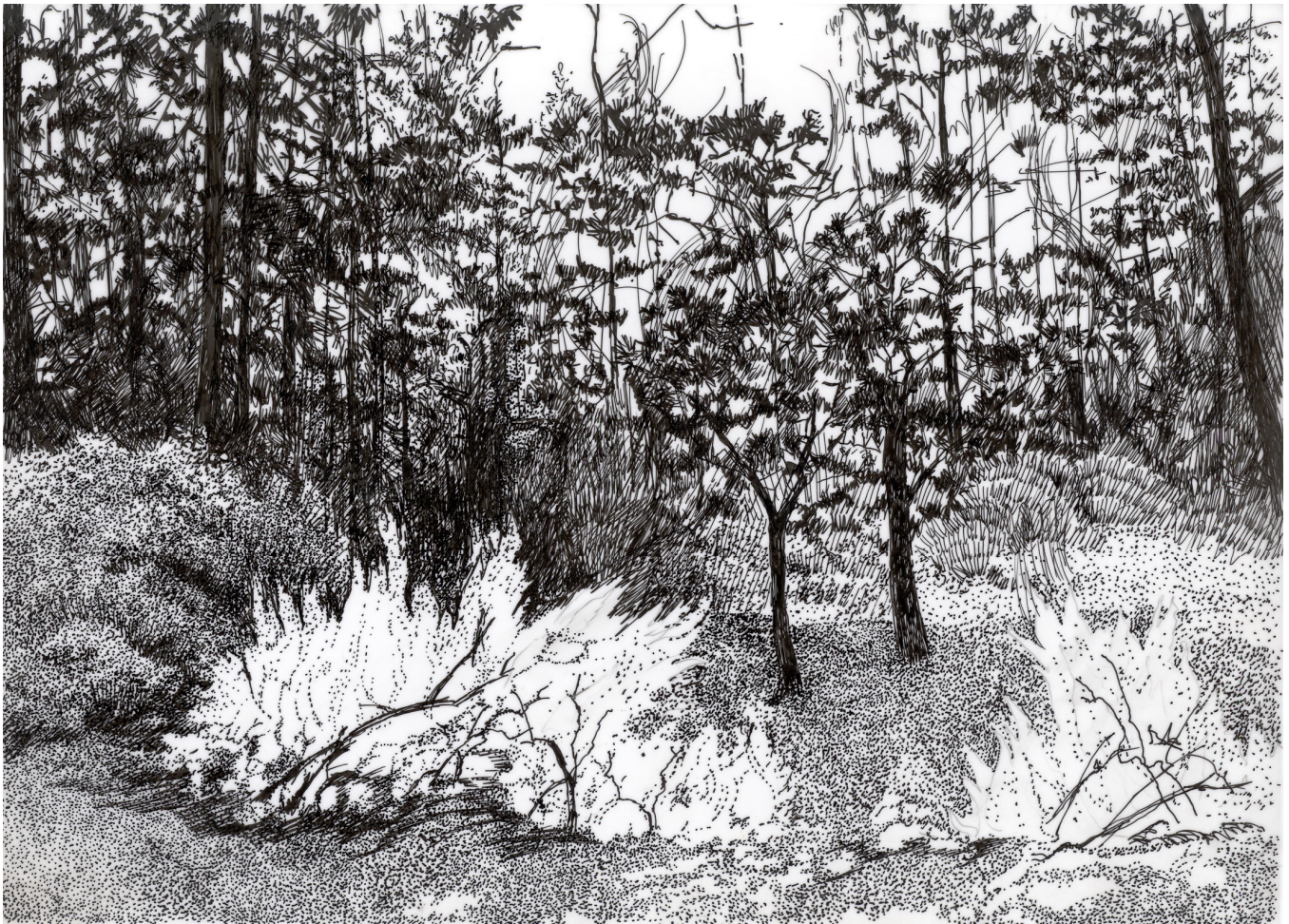
will need more work but still have strong restoration potential.” Long Valley Farm will not be open to the public during the Conservancy’s planning and restoration phase.

The Nature Conservancy has been working to conserve longleaf pine habitat in the Sandhills, “bridging the gap” between already protected lands at Fort Bragg, Camp Mackall and the Sandhills Game Land. The North Carolina Chapter has protected several key tracts in the Sandhills to date, including the 2,500-acre Calloway Forest/NC Department of Transportation mitigation tract and the 1,182-acre Carvers Creek tract, both of which feature healthy longleaf pine communities in close proximity to Fort Bragg.

In 2001, the Conservancy joined with the U.S. Army Environmental Center, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Sandhills Area Land Trust to establish the Conservation Center of the Sandhills, a joint project of-ice in Southern Pines that is fostering the type of community-based, collaborative conservation that The Nature Conservancy relies upon to achieve lasting results.

“Given its shared border with Fort Bragg, Long Valley Farm is an excellent opportunity for us to enact lasting landscape conservation,” said Associate Director Annand. “Mr. Rockefeller’s legacy will mean a lot not only to the natural communities the farm supports, but to all who care about our wild lands and waters.”

The Nature Conservancy has protected more than 574,000 acres of land in North Carolina and currently owns a network of 63 nature preserves in the state, many of which are open to the public for hiking, bird watching and paddling. The Conservancy’s mission is to preserve plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.





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### Fort Bragg Rare Bat Inventory cont.

ent types of surveys: bridge and building surveys, echolocation surveys, and mist-netting surveys. Different types of surveys are necessary in order to detect as many species as possible, as some species cannot be detected using just one method or another. For example, the Rafinesque's Big-eared bat can be captured using a mist net or seen roosting under bridges or in abandoned buildings, but is rarely heard during an echolocation survey. The Hoary bat, however, is easily heard during echolocation surveys, not frequently caught in a mist net, and is not found under bridges or in buildings (as it prefers to roost in trees). As a result of using several different survey methods, nine of the eleven species have been recorded on the installations.

Due to reduced bat activity during cold weather, Fort Bragg has discontinued the echolocation survey and the mist net survey until spring. In addition to the information collected last year, any Southeastern myotis or Rafinesque's Big-eared bats captured will be outfitted with a transmitter. The transmitter will allow us to follow the bat to its roost location. Since both bat species are known to roost as colonies in large hollow trees and buildings, following one bat to a roost location may lead us to a number of bats. We may also be able to provide some protection to the roost location. Although the bats would be captured on Fort Bragg and Camp Mackall, we may need to cross private property to follow the transmitter or the roost may be located on private land. There are no state or federal restrictions on private landowners if either of these species were to be found on your property. If you would be willing to allow bat biologists access to your property to follow a bat with a transmitter, please contact Janice Patten at the Fort Bragg Endangered Species Branch at 910-396-2544 ext 207.

